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[584]
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* [613] cerned with his own and his group's status in marriage arrange-
ments. One informant said that a rich man must marry into a
rich group. The Bedouin have a saying which is relevant here:
"Your bait is equal to the bait into which you marry." Before
her marriage the girl's duty toward her father is to respect
and obey him. After her marriage "her only duty is that she
[758] must visit him from time to time. If he becomes sick, and
he has no wife, she must care for him and nurse him."

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• 834 It was a common sight to see a Bedouin father fondle
his daughter of age six years or younger, but beyond this
age physical intimacy ceases. The Bedouin say that a father
should not kiss or hold on his knee a daughter over the age
of eleven. After the girl marries, a definite avoidance
custom characterizes the father-daughter role relationship.
The Bedouin say that the father will not see the face of his
daughter after her marriage. This means that the married
daughter remains veiled before her father, and even before
her older brothers. This type of avoidance custom is rare
by comparison with the cross-cultural data (Driver 1966).

593 A wife obeys her husband concerning all matters:
"she does not even leave the house without his permission."
A woman may go and complain to her father if her husband
does not provide for her, i.e., with food and clothing, or
if he unjustly beats her or continually threatens to beat
her. On the other hand, if a woman is in the wrong "it is

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462 them or any innate aptitude for them; this insistence is an index of the
424 jealousy with which she is prepared to guard her rights. Each right derived
from this or that small task is an extension of her control over the male.

462 The force and significance of this control is, perhaps, best seen in a
424 woman's right to cook. At marriage a woman must have at least the minimum
252 of cooking utensils, and one of the rights a man acquires in a woman is
that she cooks for him. This is something a man cannot do for himself.

[593] Therefore, when a man ill-treats his wife or threatens her with divorce, she
can retaliate by refusing to cook, or leave the tent altogether to return to her
father. A man bereft of this service is in a very sorry plight indeed. The
legal dominance of the male, seemingly autocratic, is reduced at every
point by the control a woman exercises through her exclusive right to per-
form tasks. The limits to the area of her coercive powers are significant.

562 They are confined almost wholly to domestic relationships. Legally, women
suffer such disabilities that they are almost of the status of minors; in
reality, their day-to-day living is far from intolerable because they are able
to control males over a wide field of relationships.

462 Men, excluded in the main from domestic duties around the tent, per-
424 form tasks to which their legal rights are tied. While women have access
231 to wells for water used by human beings, the transport of larger quantities
of water over longer distances, requiring the use of camels, is a task which
falls to the men. Watering of animals is done by men. Only they can
slaughter the animals for food. The meat of an animal slaughtered by a
woman is not "free," in a ritual sense, for human consumption. In an
extremity only, a woman can, in effect, kill an animal, but the knife which
cuts its throat must be held in a male hand, even if it is the hand of a very

462 small boy. The exploitation of the land is also the male prerogative. They
424 plough and sow the grain; incidental help may be provided by wives working
[241] alongside their husbands during the early part of reaping, but the main
reaping is done entirely by men. Transportation of grain to the mounds is
also carried out by men, and it is they only who have access to the grain
stores when quantities are withdrawn for family use. Sheep-shearing is
carried out entirely by males,¹⁰ the fleeces are stacked by them and the
distribution and sales of these is directed by the male head of the tent.

[236] Additional to these major tasks which males undertake are a number of
[432] minor ones. Men sew strips of cotton together to make clothes for both
sexes. They also make rope of grass, albeit in a desultory sort of way, by
twisting together the strands between the palms of the hands. A number of
• [334] other tasks fall to the men by virtue of the fact that the sexes are separated
[342] in the tent by a divider of blanket material, which may be taken down
when only members of the elementary family are about, but which is put

[461] ¹⁰ This work is reserved for the younger men and takes the form of a festival during
[533] which lewd songs are sung and poems with obscene themes or references are recited
[538] loudly and within the hearing of elders, in a manner not dissimilar to the behaviour
[831] of bachelors at a wedding.

The Bedouin of Cyrenaica

in position immediately anyone else appears at the entrance to the tent.¹¹ Women cook, but they do not serve the meal to males, nor are they responsible for the distribution of meat among them. Parts of an animal are carefully specified, and the various portions distributed at a meal carry with them a great deal of significance. A host can honour, flatter, disappoint or even insult his guest, depending on the precise distribution of meat he adopts. Designated portions should go to certain kinsmen if they are present, but this still leaves a wide margin of choice, and a host can use this choice as part of the many means at his disposal for directing his relationships with other men. A political link can be forged or another snapped by the distribution of portions of meat at the commensal meal.

The Bedouin Ideal Type of Family as a Unit of Production

This account of the division of labour is far from inclusive of all the tasks carried out. The details given are only barely sufficient to provide some indication of the necessary composition of a family. Referring again to the Bedouin sentiments about the matter, it is now possible to give it some numerical precision. The number of females should be a minimum of about three, including a mother, a teen-age daughter and a child of about eight years. Males should number about six: a father, relieved of most chores to act as director; a son in his middle to late twenties, to plough; a second son, in his early to middle twenties, to herd the camels; a third, in his late teens to early twenties, to shepherd the sheep; a fourth, middle to late teens, to look after the goats; and a younger son to fetch, carry and run errands about the camp. The family of the ordinary Bedouin, they say, shows this sex and age distribution, although they recognise that a politically ambitious man with the wealth to match his aspirations would require more of both sexes — particularly women, since the burden of entertainment increases rapidly with a man's climb to power and fame.

Clearly, the basis of Bedouin sentiment concerning family structure is its approximation to an ideal production unit. Some families display the features of this ideal, but even they enjoy the productive benefits of this composition for a very limited period only. The family, as described above, can only be an ephemeral unit, since the age structure constantly changes, women are removed by marriage, men move away and death affects it at any point at any time. The Bedouin family is a fiction in the sense that it can be said to have a characteristic composition. The mistake they make is to conceive of it as a particular kinship structure related to production. The substance of what has been referred to as a fiction is that, if viewed as a productive unit, it bears close consistency with reality. Freed of the need to examine it in terms of specifically limited kinship relationships, and no longer anchored to the inhabitants of a single tent, the distribution of people according to sex and

¹¹ This is the general rule. In practice, the use of the divider can indicate an intimacy or distance in relationships, most subtly.

THE WESTERN BEDOUIN

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Had the Senussi been successful in the last war, they would no doubt have brought in the 'Ibeidat or the 'Awaqir from Cyrenaica to replace the Awlad 'Ali in Egypt. 175 619

At the present day the Awlad 'Ali, especially the eastern sections near the Nile Valley, have almost ceased to be nomadic, and only the old men have memories of their former warlike habits. They suffered considerably during the Great War, but are again becoming prosperous. They now own large comfortable tents, are beginning to build houses and clear out cisterns, and are also said to be increasing in numbers.¹ So civilized have they grown that my guides, one a Sinai Arab and the other an 'Abadi, concurred in calling them "green"—not real desert-worthy Bedouins. 619 178

Perhaps as a result of Libyan influence, or more probably the better nurture and climate, they are taller, heavier, stronger, and lighter-complexioned than the lightly built Arabs of Sinai and Hijaz. Also they are much franker and more straightforward than their shifty and suspicious eastern cousins, and altogether more trustworthy. Their women only veil themselves to strangers, and talk quite naturally and cheerfully to the men of their own tribe. 142 157 181

They cultivate as much barley as they can, using a primitive plough drawn by camels, in the clayey hollows scattered over their very stony limestone desert, but, as the rainfall is very uncertain, a good crop only occurs every five or six years. After harvest, they exchange some of their barley for maize, which the women grind to make bread as required, and some for dried dates. The seed for next year is buried in a hole lined with straw and covered with clay, and a year's forage for the animals is set aside. The rest of the crop goes to market, and for a short time the Arab has money to buy clothes for himself and his family and at utmost need to pay off some of the numerous debts he has inherited from his forefathers. Soon he is reduced again to the clothes he wears, the tent he sleeps in, and his animals grazing in the desert. 562 834 609 243 492 132 437 251 432 426

They are great breeders of camels and sheep, and a busy traffic in these goes on weekly in the markets of Hammam, 'Amriya, and the Beheira. So they have got into the habit 436 178 437 433 433

¹ At the 1927 census, the Western Desert Arabs, Awlad 'Ali, Jawabis, etc., numbered 38,928 souls exclusive of those settled in Beheira. But Pacho, 100 years ago, estimated them at 38,000 souls. 161